

NOWHEREISLAND

EXPLORER PACK

Explorer Pack 3: Land, art and Nowhereisland

Nowhereisland is a real place, as well as a place to experiment. This makes it an ideal context for students to feel like they are making a tangible contribution, whilst still playing with ideas and new kinds of thinking. Nowhereisland Explorer Packs can be used for quick ideas, for short discussions in tutor sessions, or for larger projects. You can even use the outcomes of these activities as entries into the Resident Thinker competition.

This Explorer Pack shows how Nowhereisland connects with some other artworks made over the last 30 years, using rocks, soil and earth as their raw materials, often on a large scale and outdoors.

The examples referred to in this Pack, including Nowhereisland, use ways of making art that are often unfamiliar, but don't let this put you off!! They are also inspiring, wonderful and ambitious and will bring something unusual and different into classroom discussions and projects. They are also all good examples of how artists can make political artworks that raise questions about attitudes to landscapes and environment.

Teachers may feel these issues are more suited to exploring in depth with KS3 and KS4 students, but some of the activities in this pack are also suitable for KS1 and KS2 students. As is the case with all the Resources for Schools, we leave these decisions to teachers.

The ideas and discussion points in this Explorer Pack overlap with some of those in other packs, and teachers are advised to look at other packs for further inspiration and ideas. For example, you may wish to use some of the activities in this pack along with ideas in the Myths and Stories pack.

Preparation

Have a good look at the Nowhereisland website. Start with the About The Project section, which has some introductory information, then have a look at the Logbook, in particular the entries for September 2011, during the Arctic Expedition when the material to make Nowhereisland was obtained. Look also at the Journey section of the website to see plans for the artwork journey in 2012, an important part of the project. Then look at the Art section in the Embassy on the website, where you will find lots of information about most of the artworks referred to in this pack.

Watch and download any related Nowhereisland resources such as the creation myth video, Nowhereisland animation, PowerPoint slides, Nowhereisland introduction film and *10 ideas and a secret mission* to help you introduce the project to students. You can find links to these on the Schools Resources page.

Gather other resources you may need such as books, images, DVDs and objects, choosing from those referred to in this pack or others that you wish to use.

Getting started in the classroom

Begin with an introduction to Nowhereisland so that students understand the focus for the session.

The **Nowhereisland animation** has been made by primary school children. It is a good way to introduce the project to KSI and KS2.

The **PowerPoint** slides and notes can also be used to introduce the project. It is recommended that you edit this to suit the needs of your class and the theme of citizenship.

The **Nowhereisland introductory film** is a short trailer and gives an excellent overview, especially for KS3 and KS4.

Any discussion at this stage is useful, especially with a focus on the characteristics of Nowhereisland as an artwork. What kind of artwork is it? What materials and processes has the artist used? It might be useful to do a spider diagram to collect as much information at this stage.

Some other artworks to compare with Nowhereisland

Now move on to consider other artworks that share some qualities with Nowhereisland. Some of these artworks use land and rocks; some involve shifting land and making journeys. In all cases there are slides in the PowerPoint and additional material in the PowerPoint information sheet. Do not rely on just a single still image to discuss any of these artworks, as this rarely tells the whole story. The accompanying information for each slide should help and additional research would be useful to undertake.

Look at examples of artworks such as:

Displaced/Replaced Mass, Michael Heizer, 1969

Surrounded Islands, Christo and Jean-Claude, 1980-83

Floating Island, Robert Smithson, 1970/2005

When Faith Moves Mountains, Francis Alys, 2002

Wheatfield – A Confrontation, Agnes Denes, 1982

A Line in the Himalayas, Richard Long, 1975

In all cases, encourage questions, discussion and comments that help to compare Nowhereisland and other artworks. Teachers will have their own ways of getting discussion going. Spider diagrams with responses linked to a central phrase or image can work well. Some discussion areas could be:

Why are artists interested in making art about landscape? Depictions of landscape are almost as common as those of people in the history of making images in art, design, photography and film. Why might this be? What are the different reasons why an artist depicts and uses landscape? Why might these reasons change the way they depict landscape, change over time and between cultures? What are some of the reasons Alex Hartley has made Nowhereisland? Discuss political reasons for making art as well as individual creative motives.

What are the characteristics of these artworks? What strategies do the artists use? Discuss scale, location, materials and how an individual artist often needs to work with others to produce the work. Compare these artworks with Nowhereisland.

Art, shifting landscapes and journeys

One of the common characteristics of the examples discussed above is the shifting, movement or journeys involved in making them and producing them. Landscape is often thought of as static and unchanging, but in many different ways it is undergoing movement all the time from mechanical movements such as tunnelling and quarrying to natural erosion, windblown sand dunes and the long term shifting of tectonic plates.

The journey that Nowhereisland undertakes, from the Arctic to the south west coast, is a central aspect of this project. You can read more about shifting landscapes (and human migration) and how this is connected with Nowhereisland in the Migration and Hospitality section in the Embassy.

Return to the artwork examples that involve any kind of movement or journey. Examine these journeys in more detail. What kinds of movement is involved? Mechanical, by hand, natural, explosive, slow, massive or subtle?

Create your own shifting landscape

Many of the artworks explored in this pack are massive in scale and ambition. Rather attempting to recreate anything of this scale, this activity focuses on developing a visual proposal for an artwork. This was a strategy used by many of the artists discussed in this pack and it is one that Alex has had to use throughout the planning and making of Nowhereisland. These proposals might be made to promote the idea of a project to others, or to gain permission, for technical reasons or so the artist can try out ideas before deciding exactly what to do.

1. First choose a landscape or outside space. It's best to select one you know well, such as a area of a local park, a garden area, part of the school grounds, a nearby landscape feature such as a woods, or hill. It could be an attractive well-known place or a desolate and overlooked wasteland.
2. Gather as much visual information about this selected site as you can. This could include maps, drawings, painting and photographs. *10 ideas and a secret mission* by Keri Smith has some suggestions of how to do this, as does much of the other work of Keri Smith www.kerismith.com
3. As you explore this place and learn about it, think about what kind of shift in this place would be the most appropriate? A catastrophic change? A subtle, repeated alteration? A journey of hundreds of miles? A small shift? This decision could be influenced by your personal responses to the place or by researching the history of that place. It could be a political response or relate to an environmental issue such as land ownership or climate change. Remember, the artwork you are making is just a proposal, so you can be ambitious with your ideas and play with the impossible if you want to.
4. Create your proposal using the maps, photos and other visual information. The proposal might be a simple photomontage or combination of maps and drawings or you could produce a detailed description using text on top of images.

Sharing your work

The Nowhereisland team would really like to hear about what you get up to. You can send us pictures, scans, photocopies or post anything to the Nowhereisland Facebook page. You can find details in the Contact section of the website. We may even be able to include examples of writing or pictures in the mobile museum, also called The Embassy, which travels with Nowhereisland on the south west journey.

Enter the Resident Thinker Competition

Any of the above work you complete before 30 March 2012, you can send in as an entry to the Resident Thinker competition and, if selected, it will join the work of artists, professors and writers as one of our weekly Resident Thinker contributions. See the Resident Thinker section of the website for details.